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Letter dated 20 September 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a communication dated 19 September 2007, which I have received from the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would bring this communication to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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Annex

Letter dated 19 September 2007 from the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from May to July 2007. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jaap **de Hoop Scheffer**

Enclosure

Quarterly report on the activities of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. By resolution 1510 (2003) the Security Council requested the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide reports on the implementation of its mandate. This is the fourteenth such report by NATO and it covers the period from May to July 2007.

2. As at 29 July 2007, ISAF had 37,885 personnel from 26 NATO countries and 1,588 from 11 non-NATO countries.

Overall assessment

3. In the reporting period, ISAF continued to execute its mission in accordance with resolution 1386 (2001) to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in establishing security in the country, setting conditions to allow the Government to expand its influence and facilitate reconstruction and development projects. ISAF has continued to act to support the Afghan National Security Forces, which are increasingly capable, as exemplified by the Afghan National Army taking the lead role in a highly successful counter-insurgency operation. Opposing militant forces have continued to try to disrupt this process. From 1 May to 31 July ISAF suffered 358 casualties (56 killed in action, 268 wounded in action, 2 non-battle deaths and 32 non-battle injuries).

4. ISAF planning for operations to be conducted over the winter period in 2007 and 2008 is already under way and has included consultations with the Government as well as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Capacity-building for both the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police will remain a major priority.

Security situation

5. Opposing militant force activity throughout Afghanistan continues. Reported insurgent attacks have increased, partly in response to ISAF and Afghan National Security Force operations in the south and east of the country. ISAF and Afghan National Security Forces successes have caused the opposing militant force to change tactics, moving away from direct engagement to asymmetric attacks such as improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks with disregard for civilian casualties and the rules of war, often deliberately attacking ISAF forces in the presence of civilians during civil outreach activities. "Soft" targets, such as Afghan civilians, Government officials and international community aid workers (including non-governmental organizations), are under increasing attack from terrorist tactics such as beheadings, including attacks against minors. The opposing militant forces have increasingly favoured kidnapping as a means of terror and propaganda. Over the reporting period, they have demonstrated increasing tactical and deliberate use of Afghan civilians as human shields in military operations targeting ISAF forces, and have shown sophisticated use of propaganda techniques such as disinformation to disseminate false civilian casualty information to the media. ISAF commanders continued to take all possible steps to avoid civilian casualties and took action over the course of the reporting period to counter such Taliban tactics.

Regional security assessment

6. In Regional Command Capital, there has been increased insurgent activity following a relatively quiet period. Opposing militant force interest in attacking high-profile targets is expected to continue, particularly in Kabul itself.

7. In Regional Command North, the situation has remained mostly calm, though not stable. In addition to attacks by insurgents, criminally motivated attacks were noted. The intensified opposition by regional power brokers to the Government's authority undermines security in the region.

8. In Regional Command West, there has been an increase in instability. Farah Province continues to be the focus of insurgent activity aimed at disrupting lines of communication. Additional incidents were reported in Baghdis Province as well as in southern Herat Province.

9. Regional Command South has witnessed high levels of opposing militant force activity over the reporting period. Insurgents continued to retreat to safe havens in northern Helmand and across into Uruzgan Province. In Kandahar Province, insurgent activity focused on expanding opposing militant force influence around Kandahar city.

10. Insurgent operations in Regional Command East increased as the weather improved. Insurgents continued to seek to exploit cross-border movements into and out of Pakistan and the main tactical effort of ISAF has shifted from Regional Command South to Regional Command East. Opposing militant force tactics in Regional Command East included small-scale conventional attacks on ISAF-Afghan National Security Force border positions and lines of communication, Afghan authorities, non-governmental organizations and reconstruction and development contractors.

Disbandment of illegal armed groups

11. The Government has attempted to revitalize this programme. Key actions to be taken include disbandment rather than disarmament, weapons registration, clarification of private security companies policy and the development of an enforcement unit for the disbandment of illegal armed groups.

12. ISAF favours informing Afghans about the process of disbandment of illegal armed groups and the rights of individuals in terms of firearm laws. ISAF continues to assist the Government in implementing the mandate for this process within means and capabilities, with focused support on participation in policy development, planning, intelligence and coordination, messaging and in extremis support.

Counter-narcotics

13. The narcotics trade remains a major cause of instability that threatens all levels of governance, including police authority and the rule of law. The total number of verified hectares mechanically eradicated is well over the 2006 figures. However, this represents only 10 per cent of overall cultivation figures for 2007, which will reach record levels. It is essential that the campaign retains momentum. ISAF continues to support Government counter-narcotics programmes in accordance with the provisions of the ISAF operation plan.

Afghan National Army

14. The Afghan National Army continues to develop into a professional fighting force while simultaneously rebuilding and reorganizing. It has shown increased self-reliance in planning operations and continues to make gains in its ability to execute operations.

15. More than half of the army combat units have been assessed as manoeuvre forces that have some capability in conducting operations with external support. Collective combat skills are also assessed as improving.

16. The current manning strength of the Afghan National Army is approximately 38,000 (of which approximately 20,000 are available for operations) out of a total authorized strength of 70,000. Manpower policy concentrates on manning the established units prior to fielding additional units. The overall equipment situation continues to improve although there remains a need to sustain the improvement. In terms of training, a range of options is being examined by NATO to generate the required number of operational mentoring and liaison teams to accelerate the training of the Afghan National Army. Generating these teams is critical, as training and equipping the Army is a cornerstone of NATO activities in Afghanistan.

Afghan National Police

17. The development of the Afghan National Police continues to lag behind the targets presented to the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. Training and equipping of the Afghan National Police remains of critical importance. One of the main factors hampering development is the lack of police mentors and trainers below the provincial level. Police mentor teams are an essential element in achieving success.

18. Since its establishment in June by the European Union, the European Police Mission has started to conclude technical arrangements with lead nations in the provincial reconstruction teams.

Judicial reform and the rule of law

19. Development in these two crucial areas has been hampered by the lack of coordination of international efforts. This lack of coordination was addressed by the international community at the Rome Conference on 2 and 3 July 2007. Surveys instigated by ISAF reveal a disparate level of infrastructure and equipment across provinces and districts. The level of training of the judicial personnel often varies from a reasonable standard to illiteracy. Progress by the Government and the international community in these sectors is crucial in order to capitalize on the security provided by ISAF.

Neighbouring countries

20. The breakdown of the truce between the Government of Pakistan and local militant leaders in northern Waziristan and the security operations launched by the Pakistani authorities are likely to result in some of the militants leaving the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and North-West Frontier Province to move to the eastern border provinces in Afghanistan.

21. The first meeting of the Joint Working Group established to monitor progress on the conclusions of the Ankara Declaration of 30 April 2007 — which was signed by the Presidents of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey — was held in Ankara on

6 July 2007. At the meeting, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed on a number of cooperation programmes and a further set of confidence-building measures in addition to those agreed upon at the Ankara summit.

22. ISAF coordination with Pakistan continues to be taken forward through the Tripartite Commission, to assist the Government in improving military-to-military coordination issues. ISAF objectives are to improve trust in military cooperation on border security, intelligence-sharing and counter-improvised explosive device work. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Peace Jirga, held in Kabul from 9 to 12 August, was a major step forward.

Programme Takhim-e-Sol/strengthening peace

23. As at July 2007, it was reported that the Programme Takhim-e-Sol had succeeded in bringing in 3,800 individuals from insurgent ranks and reuniting them with their families. Additional measures to improve procedures have been made and the programme is being run under new management. ISAF continues to support the initiative within means and capabilities.

Governance

24. Public dissatisfaction with the Government's effectiveness and the slow pace of economic reform, coupled with the deteriorating security situation, is putting pressure on President Karzai and his ministers. The implementation of central government initiatives still depends heavily on the will of local political figures, some of whom are corrupt and unwilling to cooperate. Demonstrable progress by the Government and enhanced support by the international community in the field of governance is essential in meeting the public's expectations of its government and meeting the goals ISAF aims to achieve in assisting the Government in providing security.

Development

25. Provincial reconstruction teams remain the key mechanism for delivering development and extending the reach of the Government to the provinces. Support is also being provided by the provincial reconstruction teams in a mentoring capacity to offer logistics, transport and security for the subnational consultations as part of the Afghan National Development Strategy and in providing technical expertise in the production of provincial development plans.

26. Strengthening popular support for the Government is essential to the long-term strategy for development. Sustained and intensified cooperation between the international community and the Government is needed to convince the rural population that both the Government and the international community are committed to improving services at the local level.

27. ISAF manages the Afghan Country Stability Picture. This is a tool to outline the status of ongoing development projects in the country, which coordinates and shares this information with the Government and the international community, allowing all involved actors an overview of the projects which cover military and civilian development cooperation. In order to solidify the Afghan Country Stability Picture as the primary vehicle for collection and analysis in theatre, ISAF intends to establish an Internet interface, to be launched by the end of the summer in 2007.